

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Leslie Fullard-Leo, 77, family estate manager

*"Of course in the old days when you saw three or four cars parked on Kalākaua Avenue you'd say, 'Oh, somebody's giving a party.' So you'd just drop in and everyone was welcome in old Hawaiian style."*

Fullard-Leo, Caucasian, was born on September 6, 1909 in New York. His parents, Leslie and Ellen Fullard-Leo, moved the family to Hawai'i in 1915. Fullard-Leo's father, a building contractor, constructed a stucco home on Ka'iulani Avenue.

Fullard-Leo received his elementary education at Valley School and then attended Punahou for a year. He was sent to England for formal high school training.

When Fullard-Leo returned to Hawai'i, he worked as an accountant for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. He then became a merchant marine and eventually moved back to London where he got involved in the travel industry and the London stock exchange. Fullard-Leo later went to Hollywood where he pursued a successful acting career.

In 1948 Fullard-Leo returned to Waikīkī where he built a small hotel on Koa Avenue. The family home remained on Ka'iulani Avenue until 1969. Fullard-Leo now manages the family estate which still includes their original holdings in Waikīkī. He has been active with the Hawai'i Visitors Bureau and the Hawai'i Hotel Association.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Leslie Fullard-Leo (LF)

June 12, 1986

Hawai'i Kai, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Leslie Fullard-Leo at his home (above) Hawai'i Kai, O'ahu on June 12, 1986. The interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay, let's start out by asking when you were born.

LF: When I was born, it was a long time ago. It was September 6, 1909 in New York City.

HF: And how long did you stay there?

LF: Oh, I think about two years. Then we moved up to British Columbia, Victoria. And we were there three years and the family were all packed up and ready to go back to Rhodesia. But the ship that was carrying the furniture was the first one to be sunk in World War I. So my parents decided, well, the war was only going to last three months so (we took) a trip to Honolulu.

So they got here and they fell in love with the place. So my mother (and father) bought the property in Waikiki, Prince Kuhio subdivision and went back to Canada, packed up and returned here and built a house there in 1915. Because my father was a contractor. That was the first stucco house in Honolulu. It was a two-story house and for those days it was fairly nice, a lot of plaster workmanship inside like the old-time Italians did, columns and all that sort of business. It was very well built because when they tried to knock it down with the bulldozers in 1969 they had a heck of a time knocking it down. Although it was full of termites. I guess they were still holding hands. (Chuckles)

IH: Okay, and what were your parents names now?

LF: My father's name was the same as mine, Leslie Fullard-Leo, although I have a middle name, Vincent, Leslie Vincent Fullard-Leo. Leslie Vincent was the name I used when I was in pictures in Hollywood from 1940 until 1948.

IH: And your mother's name?

LF: My mother's name was Ellen. Her middle name was Barber, B-A-R-B-E-R, which was an old Irish title. There was a Lady Barber in South Africa. One of her--I don't know whether it was an aunt or a great-aunt. They named a town after her called Barberton which is still there. And they raised a peculiar kind of daisy. They call it Barberton daisy. They still call it that in South Africa. We call them African daisies.

IH: Okay, and you said that your parents built a house on Prince Kūhiō property or Prince Kūhiō tract?

LF: Well yes, the land was sold off by Prince Kūhiō. It was on the corner of Prince Edward [Street] and Ka'iulani [Avenue]. And my mother just bought two lots, the other one bounded on Koa [and Ka'iulani] Avenues.

IH: And to your understanding where was the Prince Kūhiō subdivision?

LF: Well I think it went from Ka'iulani Avenue and about two or three blocks Diamond Head of that. And the boundary was Prince Edward Street where our house was because 'Āinahau [i.e., the Cleghorn estate, remembered as Princess Ka'iulani's home] started right there. In fact by the back part of our property, on Koa and Ka'iulani [Avenues], used to be the sentry boxes which guarded the entrance to the driveway--which is now Ka'iulani Avenue--to 'Āinahau, to Princess Ka'iulani's palace, which was still there when I was small.

IH: And so the Prince Kūhiō subdivision was from Ka'iulani [Avenue] down to, you said two blocks down?

LF: Might have been more, maybe as far as 'Ōhua [Avenue].

IH: Okay, and then [the other boundaries were] from Kalākaua [Avenue] to Prince Edward [Street]?

LF: To Prince Edward. It might have been up to Kūhiō Avenue. I'm not quite sure on that.

IH: Okay. And about how large was your property?

LF: Well that first part was just two lots my mother bought, about 10,000 square feet. Because in those days it was terribly high-priced; even then it was \$2,500 for the whole thing. But since then I personally added about seven more lots to it; which makes it about an acre, or half the block. And that's where King's Alley is today. We lease the land to Mr. [Chris] Hemmeter who developed King's Alley.

IH: You told me the house was stucco and two-story. Is there anything else you can tell me about the house, maybe how many bedrooms it was?

LF: Well, I suppose it had a total of four bedrooms. The upstairs one was mine, which was the attic, which I loved. It ran the length of the house. Ever since, I've liked big bedrooms. And the others. . . . It had very high ceilings, twelve-foot ceilings. And all the plaster ceilings, intricate work on it and columns going up to it.

IH: Was it elevated?

LF: Yes, it was about five feet above the ground. And just as well because in those days nearly every winter that whole area used to flood. You see Kalakaua Avenue's a little higher I suppose, because originally there must have been sand dunes there and inland the land is lower. And then the river would overflow, there was no [Ala Wai] Canal there then. A little river came almost next to our property, which went through where the Ka'iulani Hotel is now and out to what used to be the old Outrigger [Canoe] Club, which was 'Ewa of the Moana Hotel and Diamond Head of the Seaside Hotel. Those were the only two hotels in Waikiki at that time. That [stream] used to flood and we used to get on surfboards. Sometimes the water would be four feet deep in that area. We'd go around on surfboards and little rafts we made and things. And as we used to play in the stream too which was. . . . I mean I wouldn't go near it now or let a child of mine go near it, it was pilau. That's what they call stink.

IH: You're talking about the Ala Wai [Canal]?

HF: No, no. That little stream long before the Ala Wai was built. The Ala Wai was not dug until 1923.

IH: Was that stream very deep?

LF: Well, I was pretty small then (chuckles) so I thought it was deep. It was probably about five, six feet deep and went down and went under a bridge which was across Kalakaua Avenue. And it got shallow then and used to get blocked up by the sand dunes. Then it would back up a bit and get rather stagnant. And although my parents (tried) to keep me out of it, it was still very intriguing.

IH: And that would be 'Āpuakēhau Stream?

LF: Yes, that's right.

IH: And you said that ran across the street from your house along Ka'iulani?

LF: Well, it was just the other side of Ka'iulani Avenue and about through where Kānekapōlei [Street] is. It was alongside that triangle park. It was on the edge of it, because we owned that property for a while. And it went through the--what's that hotel? The Outrigger East, I suppose. And then just back where the



[Princess] Ka'iulani Hotel is now. But when they dug the [Ala Wai] Canal they filled that [i.e., 'Āpuakēhau Stream] in with coral.

IH: And when you folks owned that triangle park, was it a park at that time too?

LF: No, no we had some apartments on it. But it was condemned by the city when they widened Kānekapōlei. We asked them to exchange it and block off the dog leg of Ka'iulani Avenue but Mr. (George) Houghtailing, (city planning director), wouldn't allow that.

IH: And when was this that they took away that property?

LF: That was about 1952, I'm just guessing. I might be a few years off. Might've been a little earlier.

IH: Okay, going back to your house now can you describe what the yard looked like?

LF: Well it didn't have a very big yard in front or around the sides but there was enough, (about fifteen feet), until they widened Ka'iulani [Avenue] to go on to Kānekapōlei [in 1955]. That made it very close to the sidewalk. But we had a big back yard of about 5,000 square feet, big hedges around it and big trees in it. Had one of the first--have you ever seen a sausage tree? One of those in there too. The tourists were always intrigued with it in those days. But it was a very nice back yard and my mother kept a lot of pets.

IH: What kind of pets did she have?

LF: Oh, she had parrots and a spider monkey and love birds and dogs and cats of course.

IH: When you folks moved onto that property how many other homes were on your block?

LF: There weren't any. Then later they built a cottage across the street on Koa [Avenue], which belonged to the Territorial Hotels, which was the Moana. The Haynes lived there, Warren Haynes. He was one of the--an insurance man. He's one of the beginners of the Home Insurance Company which is now, what's it called?

IH: First Insurance.

LF: First Insurance, yes. And Mrs. Haynes was a socialite from Chicago. I grew up with the two children, Virginia and Warren. Warren is "Bull" Haynes whom a lot of people know now.

IH: Did you folks have any servants in the house such as cooks, or a yardman?

LF: No, we didn't have cooks but well, we had like the old-time houses. We had yardman and a mama-san and so forth which you can't get nowadays.

IH: When you say mama-san, what did she do?

LF: Well, clean the house; and help with the dishes; and little bit of the cooking.

IH: And where did she come from? Was she from the neighborhood?

LF: Oh well, we had different ones at different times. I really don't remember. We had one gal whom I still know. She was a nursemaid to my brothers when they were small, because they were much younger than I. I was already grown up and had left Hawai'i. I was living in England. Later on she became the head maid of my little hotel.

IH: Was she from the neighborhood?

LF: No, she was from Kalihi. Her name was Shandra Kaahea.

IH: Okay, now I'd like to ask you some questions about the neighborhood. I think you've already described the stream across from your house. Then the wooden bridge you said was across Kalākaua [Avenue]?

LF: No, no. This was much further up, almost opposite our place, was probably right next to that little triangular park. It went from there. It was just a little wooden bridge. And there were some people I know, a Hawaiian family there, called Miller. And I think that Miss Hawai'i, of I don't know what year, she was a Miss Miller. She came from there and there were a couple of Japanese families lived there too.

IH: You said you were the first house on the block but in later years other people moved in . . .

LF: Oh yes, they slowly built the whole area up but unfortunately there were very small lots. They were nearly all 4,125 square feet. That's 50 [feet] by 82-1/2 [feet]. And there were all sorts of regular bungalow type houses, two or three bedrooms.

IH: Okay, who were some of the other neighbors that you remember that moved in after? I think you mentioned before . . .

LF: The Olmos family.

IH: . . . the Olmos family.

LF: The Petersons and the Crows, I think that was their name, down at the other end of the block. And some people called Sinsheimer. They were about three houses down. Years later of course it changed. Different people moved in, the Regos were next door to us.

IH: Were these people mostly, predominantly of one ethnicity?

LF: Well, some part-Hawaiian, Haole and some Portuguese mostly.

IH: So would you say it was mostly Portuguese?

LF: No, it was mostly Haole. Haole and Hawaiian.

IH: I think you mentioned that you spent some time at the Cunha Estate.

LF: Oh yes, they were further down Waikīkī, just before you get to the park. I grew up with Cecily Cunha, who was a great friend of mine. She died about five years ago. Her uncle was "Sonny" Cunha, well-known song writer. We always used to get a kick out of him because he had a Model-T Ford and he was very fat. So he could just move his 'opū one way or the other, it would turn the steering wheel. He'd drive around with no hands.

And then there was the Harris family, part-Hawaiian, Gay Harris. Then further down Kalākaua Avenue his cousins Beth Campbell, who is now Mrs. McLaughlin whose daughter is Mary Worrall the realtor, and her mother and auntie, they were born here in the islands and they were great favorites of the royal family.

IH: What stores do you remember in your neighborhood?

LF: Well the [N.] Aoki Store which was down about on 'Ōhūa Avenue, about the corner of 'Ōhūa and Kalākaua [Avenues]. Everyone traded with the Aoki Store. Otherwise the only way was to go into town at May & Company, which was down King [Street] between Fort and Bethel Streets. They used to buy their groceries and (have them) put it on the streetcar. Then the streetcar would stop at the corner and ring its gong and people would come out and pick up their groceries from the streetcar. They'd order it by telephone.

IH: Were there any street peddlers that came around to your house?

LF: Oh yes, and they had little wagons, vegetable man, fruit and different things like that. Usually I think there was a Chinese man who had a cart and horse. He used to come by. And then we used to go down to the park. There was a little Japanese lady had one of those I think they call them two-wheel. They call them sampans or something and she used to sell shave ice. Of course those days you could get an ice-cream cone for five cents.

IH: Would that be Kapi'olani Park?

LF: Yes. And every evening she'd push this heavy little cart. They were sort of built like a little Japanese temple. You've probably seen them. Well, they have them in the International Market [Place], that type of thing. And she'd push it a long way down Kalākaua Avenue I think. She lived way down there. I don't know

how she did it. I wouldn't like to do it. The streetcar then used to go right to the end of Kapi'olani [Park] where Kalākaua [Avenue] goes into Diamond Head Road.

When I was a kid, Queen Lili'uokalani came to call on my mother. This was about 1916 or '15. Because my mother had become active in things. Of course, I was told the queen was coming and I was terrified because I'd only read in fairy stories where the queens always chopped your head off. So I was dressed up in a little sailor suit and stood at attention. She came in a big black coach with four black horses and a footman and the driver--she always dressed in black ever since she was forced off the throne. She had apparently a long visit with my mother. They'd met several times after that too. And Queen Lili'uokalani said to my mother, "Well, we have one thing in common."

My mother said, "Well what is that?"

She said, "We both lost our country to foreigners." Because my mother was from South Africa which the British had taken over in the Boer War.

IH: Interesting that you got to meet the queen.

LF: Also then in 1917 I went and watched the funeral too.

IH: And speaking of royalties, can you describe to me what 'Āinahau was like?

LF: Well 'Āinahau was an area of about sixty acres; and it went up to about what is the Ala Wai [Boulevard] now from our place. Mr. Cleghorn used to bring plants from all over the world or import them and it was quite an interesting botanical gardens; had a lot of little lily ponds in it and bridges across it and was very pretty. It was offered to the city after Mr. Cleghorn had died and Ka'iulani had died much later, but the city didn't want to accept it as a botanical park because it would cost too much to keep up. Besides, who goes to Waikīkī in those days?

IH: Was there a fence around it?

LF: No, just the sentry boxes which were right by our back yard. Now King's Alley has recreated one of the sentry boxes which it has out on the corner of Koa and Ka'iulani [Avenues]. In my time they didn't have the sentries there. But I suppose during Ka'iulani's time when she was there, there were sentries in it.

IH: And what was the house like?

LF: Which house? 'Āinahau?

IH: The palace.

LF: The palace. It was a wooden house, big Victorian type of mansion. It was dark red. It was opposite a great big banyan tree which was called Princess Ka'iulani's banyan. There were a lot of peacocks up there too. And that's where Ka'iulani named that flower, pikake, from peacock. Years later when the area was subdivided, the owner of that lot--he was a lawyer, I forget his name--but as the banyan tree took up the whole lot, and the city wasn't interested in preserving it, they cut it down. So when anyone claims now that Ka'iulani's banyan tree is in the Banyan Restaurant or in the courtyard of the Moana Hotel, they're quite wrong. Because the tree in the Moana is not a banyan. It's a Moreton Bay fig. It's very much the same but it's not a banyan.

IH: And then after Ka'iulani died didn't they rent it out to someone?

LF: Well, years later it was rented out to a gal called Peggy Aldridge who'd been a silent star in films. Then she later became Peggy Michopholos. I don't know her name at present, if she's still alive. But she shocked the whole neighborhood because she had a white bathing suit. And she had bleached white hair like Jean Harlow. She even wore white shoes, and that was a no-no in those days. But she and her husband started a film company and they stored the film and also processed the film up in this old mansion of Ka'iulani's. One night it caught on fire, the film did, and the whole place went up in flames.

IH: And you were living in Waikīkī at that time?

LF: Oh yes, I went and saw it, great sight. It was a terrible tragedy though. The house had a big swimming pool right next to it and the fire department used that to pump water out to try and put the fire out.

IH: So the house was completely . . .

LF: Yes, completely destroyed.

IH: . . . destroyed? Is that when they sold the property or was it sold before that?

LF: No, it was sold later I'm sure.

IH: So the fire was about 1920 I think you said.

LF: I think it was about that time, yes. I might be a couple of years off. Because I left the islands in 1924 to go to school in England.

IH: So when 'Āinahau was sold to the developer, then he subdivided the property?

LF: He cut it up in all very small lots and very small streets. That's why it's so congested even today. It was a great shame. My family



had wanted to buy it and develop it and have one-half acre estates in there; which would have made it nice with the wider streets and preserved some of the botanical gardens. But all of that was completely wiped out.

IH: Yeah, that's a shame. What was the environment like in Waikīkī especially before the Ala Wai [Canal] went in?

LF: Well, as I remember it, every once in a while, it was pretty odiferous. You could smell it a long way away. Because there were rice paddies and duck ponds up there. I remember as kids we used to go up there and try and steal duck eggs. And the old Chinese man chased us with a shotgun. We had a lot of fun up there.

And right across from the Moana Hotel there was an old Hawaiian church and a graveyard. Years later they decided to--this was in the early twenties--dig all the graves up and relocate them somewhere else. I remember all the Hawaiians would come and sit around and have their kaukau and say, identify them. And they'd be digging all these bones up and everything. Then the Moana [Hotel] built a lot of cottages in there. Of course then years later they were torn down and they built the Princess Ka'iulani Hotel.

IH: So [the graveyard] was this side of the cottages then, right where the [Princess] Ka'iulani Hotel is?

LF: Yes.

IH: Oh. And then you must have witnessed the Ala Wai going in, the construction of the Ala Wai [Canal]?

LF: Yes. They started that I think in 1923. I don't know if they'd completed it by the time I went away to school; but they dredged up and filled in a lot of the duck ponds with the coral that they dug out of that, and the soil, and that made a pretty good smell too. But the only thing was, there was a lot of blue mud which really stank. But it had the most beautiful shells in it. Because at one time the ocean had been up there I suppose, and it had beautiful shells we used to go and find there.

IH: Okay, what other things can you remember doing as a youth in Waikīkī?

LF: Oh, bad things. (Laughs) Well we used to go surfing and swimming a lot. And run around, have fun like kids do. And we used to collect kiawe beans because there were a lot of kiawe trees there. When we first bought the property there were a lot of cattle there (in Waikīkī). There were horses and cows and kiawe trees and of course they ate the beans. So as kids we used to collect all the beans in sacks and sell it to the Chinese man who I suppose sold it to the cattle people.



IH: What schools did you attend?

LF: Well I went to---well the first school I went to when we moved here while our house was being built, we lived up on Wilhelmina Rise, and I went to Lili'uokalani School which is in Kaimukī. Then I went to the Military Academy which was down behind Diamond Head. It's near where "Hawai'i Five-0" studios are now. Then I went to the Valley School in Nu'uano and my classmates were Lili'uokalani and Kapi'olani Kāwananakoā, Eva King and the Paieas. They were a Chinese-Hawaiian family. Then I went to Punahou for one year in 1923.

IH: Were there any other of your neighbors in Waikīkī that went to any of those schools?

LF: I don't remember any going to Valley School.

IH: What about Punahou?

LF: Punahou, well I was just there one year. I think Roy Crow was there. Of course the Haynes children were younger than I. Everybody's younger than me. They always were.

IH: And then you finished your schooling in England?

LF: I went there for four years, yes, to a school called Clayesmore, near Winchester in England. C-L-A-Y-E-S-M-O-R-E. It is now a big school on the Isle of Wight; but when I went there it was a smaller school.

IH: And why did you go there?

LF: Well my parents were---my mother was from South Africa and my father was from Australia which were both British countries. I suppose they sent me there, they thought they'd make a gentleman out of me. But they failed there too. (Laughs) When I went over in 1924 I was fifteen years old. My mother was on the International Olympic Committee, and also she was chaperone for the American Olympic teams; especially the swimming team from here, which was Duke Kahanamoku, David and Sam Kahanamoku, Gay Harris, Bill Harris and the Kealoha boys, Pua Kealoha and Warren Kealoha. And Marichen Weshlau who was the woman world champion at the time. I was a substitute on the team because I was a pretty good swimmer.

IH: Okay, so you went for four years to school in England and then what happened?

LF: Then I came back here and I was working for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. Then the depression started so I just got on a ship, worked my way to the Orient, Japan. I was with the Dollar Line, a crew member on that. Then I stopped in Shanghai and Hong Kong for a little over a year. Did some radio work and also joined a

vaudeville troupe. I was their traveling manager and fill-in at times. I suppose that's where I got the acting bug.

And then after that I went to Hollywood, jumped ship and did a little extra work. I got fed up with that, came back here, spent about a year. Then I went back to England. I was going to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, but I couldn't afford it at that time because it was fifty dollars a month.

So then I got a job in a travel agency and through social contacts I finally got onto the London Stock Exchange. I was the only foreigner that's ever been on the London Stock Exchange; because they don't allow foreigners on it, but I have dual nationality. When I was born my parents were British subjects, and the British said, well, they didn't care. So when I'm in England I'm a British subject. I stayed there until the war [i.e., World War II] had begun; and then I had to come back to New York on business and then they wouldn't let me go back to England. I was heartbroken. (In London I knew) Freddie Brisson who was married to Rosalind Russell. His father had been a great actor, Carl Brisson. And his wife was the comedian. Musical star. Do you remember her? She died just a few years ago.

So he gave me introductions to Hollywood and I followed that up. Then I got into pictures through my old friend whom I had known in Europe, Marlena Dietrich. I did about thirty-one pictures, supporting parts, in eight years. Then the (film) strikes started and at that time in '48 my father was rather ill. He was dying and my mother wasn't well. We were having a big case against the government about Palmyra [Island]. They tried to steal it from us but we got it back. (Finally after four appeals by the government), we got to the Supreme Court of the United States (where we won. Then I had to appeal) to two sessions of Congress. Later I was appointed on the [Hawai'i] Statehood Commission. Meanwhile I built a small hotel in Waikiki and bought the rest of the property which adjoined my mother's property.

IH: And what was the name of this hotel that you built?

LF: The Kahili.

IH: And that was in 1952?

LF: Yes, about 1952.

IH: What was that like?

LF: Well it was an apartment hotel. It was small. It was three stories. It had large apartments in it. It was a very nice place but a small hotel, so I finally got into the Hotel Association. I became a director of the [Hawai'i] Hotel Association. And the HVB [Hawai'i Visitor's Bureau], I was on the convention committee. Then I started the Small Hotel Association (of Hawai'i), because

there were more small hotel rooms than there were big hotel rooms at that time. I was president of that for a while.

IH: So after the 1950s did you live mostly here?

LF: Yes.

IH: And in the meantime you also got married?

LF: Yes, I was married in 1950 to a gal . . .

IH: What is her name?

LF: Ruth Nicholson from Longview, Texas.

IH: So the both of you came back here then?

LF: No, we lived in Los Angeles, [California] and in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And then we separated and I came back here. She was a doctor; and she was a very good doctor, and she was interested. . . . She built her own clinic in Santa Fe, New Mexico and helped the Indians out there. She died in 1976, although she was much younger than I.

IH: Your mother stayed in Waikīkī until 1969?

LF: [Nineteen] sixty-nine, yes.

IH: Was the property always the same up until that time?

LF: Yes, her house was, and the back yard, yes. Except where they had widened the street, they'd taken some of the property off for that. But even so it was a very nice place. But then all the high-rises were going up and the noise. What they call the "Waikīkī Symphony," which were the pile drivers. So she was glad to go out to Kāhala. She had a smaller house there and nice garden. She stayed there until she died in 1974.

IH: So she was happy to move out of Waikīkī?

LF: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: And was that because of the congestion that was going on?

LF: Yes. Congestion and the noise and the tour buses. When we first came here there were very few tourists. In fact there were very few people. The whole of this island only 40,000 people and twenty-seven automobiles. Now it's 800,000 people and 510,000 automobiles.

IH: When did she start feeling uncomfortable in Waikīkī? Do you remember?

LF: Well, the late '60s, from '65 on. They built the Biltmore Hotel and the Princess Ka'iulani [Hotel], part of it. It sort of towered over our back yard, so it wasn't as pleasant as it had been. And the tour buses, that was terrible because they always parked there and left their engines running, and (with the) diesel fumes and the noise of the air conditioners it was too much.

IH: What about the rest of the neighborhood, did they last that long into the '60s?

LF: No, most of the people whose property I bought around there had become quite elderly and so I. . . . After they passed away I usually bought the property from the estate, their respective estates. Then a lot of small apartment hotels were built along Koa Avenue, wiping out the little old houses.

IH: So when would you say would be kind of the end of the small-house era in your neighborhood?

LF: I'd say it was beginning about in the early '50s. Because there's still one or two left there. Now the lots are too small because of the building restrictions to put anything feasible on them. So they have to try and get together with the neighbors and join together so they can sell it and put up a big building. But a lot of them won't do that. Some people have lived there all their lives. I believe that the Peterson's house, the last I've seen, they've just raised it up and put another floor under it; and I think it's a Japanese restaurant.

IH: Then King's Alley sits on your property, doesn't it?

LF: Yes.

IH: And you said Hemmeter . . .

LF: Yes, Chris Hemmeter developed it.

IH: Can you tell me something about the buildings in that?

LF: Well if you look at King's Alley you'll see they're all separate little buildings. They are replicas of buildings that existed in old-time monarchy time, Downtown Honolulu. But they're all done to five-seventh scale I believe. So if you look at it, you'll see they're all different little buildings in there.

IH: So you still own that property then?

LF: Yes.

IH: Okay, I think that's about it unless there's anything else you can remember that you'd like to add.

LF: Well, when people talk about the old days in Waikīkī, it had some drawbacks too. Besides the flooding and the smell from the swamps and the mosquitos. They used to be so thick you wouldn't believe it. And of course the usual tropical cockroaches and things and centipedes and scorpions. But most of that's been wiped out by the concrete now too. So in some ways it's better. But it's not as quiet as it used to be.

Of course in the old days when you saw three or four cars parked on Kalākaua Avenue you'd say, "Oh somebody's giving a party." So you just drop in and everyone was welcome in old Hawaiian style.

IH: Was your neighborhood pretty open?

LF: What do you mean open?

IH: Where everybody in the neighborhood kind of knew each other.

LF: Oh yes. And as kids, there were panax hedges between a lot of the [house] lots. But we always knew how to get through that and run around.

IH: I think you mentioned too, I forgot to ask you about, your father was involved in building the Royal Hawaiian Hotel?

LF: Yes, he was a subcontractor on that. He'd warned them about the construction; after it had been built it sank about eighteen inches, one wing. Of course broke all the plumbing and the plaster, so he had a lot of the renovation work to do there. They didn't put the pilings deep enough. They went down till they hit coral and they thought that was solid. But over the centuries you get coral when the ocean's in there. Then it recedes, then it'd be mud. Then the ocean comes back, there'll be another layer of coral. And with the weight on it, it would squeeze the mud out so the whole thing sank. Of course now they put the pilings really deep for some of those big buildings.

Before that of course, just to the 'Ewa side of that, was the old Seaside Hotel, which had a sort of veranda that went over the ocean just like the old Castle home out on Diamond Head Point, which is where the Elks Club is now. And also the Steiner house, they were our neighbors, right on the ocean. They had a house with two big pillars right into the sand. Of course they don't allow that now, thank goodness, didn't leave much beach for anybody else. Then they all built walls along there which caused erosion. So that finally when Kūhiō Beach was made, they had to bring in a lot of sand there, and put up all those concrete walls to keep the sand in.

IH: Also, your mother, I meant to ask you about your mother. She has been mentioned by other neighbors in your area. She was quite well liked in the neighborhood. Can you say a little bit about her?



LF: Well, she was a very active woman. When she came from South Africa and married my father in New York, she started the first women's swimming club. That was in 1908. Usually women weren't allowed to be seen in anything except baggy pants and rompers and things like that. She started the first swimming club. She did the same. . . . When we lived in Victoria, B.C. [British Columbia] my father built what they call the new wing of the Empress Hotel and the Crystal Gardens in the back, which has a swimming pool. They each started swimming clubs there.

Then when she came down here, she was interested that the local swimmers should belong to the Amateur Athletic Union, so that they could compete in the Olympic games. So she organized that. In fact she had an honorary black belt also from the karate people; because she organized and got them recognized as an international Olympic sport. Then she was on the International Olympic Committee. She was appointed by President Eisenhower for the rehabilitation or the physical development of young children, because American children had very little of that. In fact American boys at grade school were not as strong or could not compete with English school girls. And all the European countries, of course they're great for calisthenics and sports development. This country was very backward at that time. Now they've gone overboard the other way.

And then she used to write for the Honolulu Advertiser, sporting column, for years. When she made a trip around the world by herself in 1951, she wrote up the athletic facilities in all the different countries. She even went to Russia and wrote it all up. The Advertiser wouldn't publish it because they said it was communist propaganda; which had nothing to do with politics. She was just reporting on their facilities, and how very advanced they were to us in the development of the children and so forth.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

LF: When I went with her for a trip back to South Africa in 1970, she also got the South African government to allow Black athletes to compete. She was there for the games in Capetown, but the American AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] boycotted it. Although they were allowing the Blacks to compete with the Whites, but they continued that propaganda against it. So that's all a different story too. Then she was the American representative official to the South American games in Buenos Aires; and was a guest of the Perons there. She came back with some stories about that too.

IH: Gee, she was quite an active woman.



LF: And she helped with the Uluniu Club. I think it had been formed just before we came here but anyway she was very active in it up until the time of her death, keeping the Uluniu Club going. Then she was interested in The Outdoor Circle and was one of the moving spirits to help ban billboard advertising in Hawai'i; which thank goodness we don't have anymore. And I remember the Housewives League boycotted all the stores that sold cigarettes or advertised products that were on billboards. That's how they got the billboards stopped.

IH: And where was the Uluniu Swim Club located when your mother first joined?

LF: It was adjoining the Outrigger [Canoe] Club which was right next to, Diamond Head of the. . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

LF: Where was I?

IH: The Uluniu Swim Club, where it was located.

LF: Well, it was adjacent to the Outrigger which is just Diamond Head side of the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel], where the Royal Hawaiian is now. Later the Outrigger Club moved out toward Diamond Head, where it is now. Where the Royal was, just the other side of where the Sheraton [Hotel] is now, was Bertha Young's house. It was a big house right on the edge of the water there. She was a member of the [Alexander] Young family. Of course then there was the Halekulani and the Niimalu Hotels. Niimalu was where the [Hilton] Hawaiian Village is now.

IH: So when they started building more hotels on the beach, is that when the homes came off or did the homes come off . . .

LF: It's about when they started to build the condominiums and the hotels. That was around the end of the '50s. Because then when we got statehood it all boomed because Americans realized they could come here. It wasn't a "savage" country anymore.

(Laughter)

IH: Okay, I think that's it. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

LF: Well, except to say that my mother was always great for defending and restoring the war memorial [i.e., the Natatorium] near Diamond Head, you know the big swimming structure there. Of course they let it all fall apart, but in the old days they used to have the swimming trials for the athletes there. My mother used to organize all the swimming meets, and the track and field meets; and also between the civilians and the army and the navy.

IH: Is there anything else that she was active in in Waikīkī, specifically? In saving or changing?

LF: No, I did a few things but. . . .

IH: Such as. . . .

LF: Well at one time the city was renting the Waikīkī Tavern, which stood right on Kūhiō Beach. They were renting that, I believe, for about a hundred dollars a month; and the man who was subletting it was getting about a thousand dollars a month. I was in the (Hawai'i) Hotel Association at that time. And I said, "Well, this is wrong because that's supposed to be public beach. Get it off. In the first place it's a firetrap. There's a small hotel in it." And I said the structure was in such bad condition. I had the [Honolulu] Advertiser come out and take pictures of the rats running along from the kitchens and even along (the sidewalk) there. It was a real mess. It was a fire hazard because they had a surfboard building shop underneath the hotel rooms; which was all very flammable stuff. While this controversy was going on, big waves came and knocked some of the underpinnings out, and part of the dining room collapsed into the water. The man who (leased) it came to our hotel association meeting in Maui, in Wailuku, really chewed me out. Although he wasn't an invited guest. But finally they had to move off there and then they developed Kūhiō Beach.

And I also started, after one trip I had made to Europe, the clean-up campaign. Because at that time there used to be so much litter and stuff around in the streets, trying to get people conscious of that. The Hawai'i Hotel Association in those days put up \$5,000 to put it on television and radio, trying to educate the people, to stop throwing paper around. But it's in some ways much cleaner than it was. I mean after you've been to Switzerland and Germany and Holland and England and seen how clean it is in those countries, one is rather ashamed to think we Americans can't do the same.

IH: So you've been quite active in Waikīkī even though you don't still live there, you still own property there. Do you still belong to those associations?

LF: I'm an auxiliary member of the Hawai'i Hotel Association. Because I'm out of the business now. But I knew all the old-timers, Roy Kelley, and Henry Kaiser and all that bunch.

IH: How did the new zoning laws affect Waikīkī?

LF: Well at that time even when I built, you had to have a setback from the sidewalk, which is quite right, about ten feet. Then after three stories, you had to stay back one foot for each floor above. But a lot of people have circumvented that. I mean even buildings that were built years later, even in the '70s, that were right on the street, go up twenty-five, thirty stories. Like up on

Tusitala, which is a very narrow street. Now the laws are very strict. In fact . . .

IH: But didn't they get strict quite a while ago?

LF: Oh, yes.

IH: How were they allowed to build after that?

LF: Well I don't know. That's something you ought to bring up to the city council. It seems like somebody knows somebody or has something somebody else wants and they make deals.

IH: Do you think that building code was good for Waikīkī?

LF: Yes, they didn't start it soon enough though. I remember talking many years ago with Frank Fasi. I had known him, because I'd been on the Statehood Commission (to Washington) with him. We met one day on the corner of Uluniu and Koa [Avenues], and he had a wonderful idea for Waikīkī. He said all these tiny little blocks and streets, they should combine four blocks into one super block. And have wide avenues around it and just put up one building. Doesn't matter how high they go so long as they have setbacks. They can have gardens, and parking underneath, and fountains. Then the breeze and the sun and everything could penetrate everything. Instead of them almost touching one another. That way you don't care how high they go. So long as you have big open space all around. Would have been very nice, but at that time he wasn't mayor; and he didn't have that much clout. So everyone built on their little lots and went as high as they could, almost touching one another, ten feet apart. So that's made it in some ways very unattractive.

And also the big hotels I think were at fault for. . . . Like in most European resorts, whether it's in Cannes, Juan-les-pines or Nice, you have the beach; and then you have an esplanade which is planted with beautiful flowers. Then you have the boulevard, then more planting, and then the hotels. Here they build them right on the sand. Then they scream and say there isn't any sand, there isn't any beach. Like those wings of the Moana [Hotel] are right in the sand. That was very shortsighted, I think, of them. They say well, they didn't want people crossing the boulevard. Well they do it in Cannes, and they have as much traffic there. They say, "Well, people might get killed in the traffic."

I say, "Well, then they shouldn't build high-rises. They could fall off the high floors." You can't protect people from everything. No, if you could drive along the boulevard, say all the way from Fort DeRussy along by the seashore, and have an open view of the ocean, it would be beautiful. With planting just like Kūhiō Beach is. But have that all the way along. But now the boulevard except for Kūhiō Beach is behind buildings. You can't even see the ocean. So I think they've missed the boat. I mean

they could have kept it really the most beautiful spot in the world, tourist spot. But people like to be on the beach.

IH: When you were small in your neighborhood did you folks have much dealings with tourists?

LF: No, there were very few tourists then. When we were kids, Mother would say, "Where have you been?"

We would say, "We were down at the Moana [Hotel], looking into the lanai." Practically the only people, tourists that traveled in those days were the English, because they were the wealthiest people at that time. The Arandora Star was a cruise ship. She used to come in and we'd go and watch the English ladies sitting on the Moana terrace smoking. In those days nice American women didn't smoke, but English women always did smoke. And they wore make-up and drank cocktails. Terrible. (Laughs)

Of course the big social attraction was the Moana Hotel. We used to have dances every Saturday night on the terrace. And there used to be the Hale'iwa Hotel which was very much like the Moana but smaller. We used to take the train out there, have dinner there and dance. Take the midnight train back again, all down the Wai'anae Coast and everything. That was very nice.

IH: How long did that take, to get to Hale'iwa from Waikīkī?

LF: Oh, probably about---well, from the station Downtown it probably took an hour and a half or something.

IH: But you folks used to travel that distance?

LF: Yes, it was too bad they got rid of that hotel. It was very attractive, Hale'iwa.

IH: And what were dances like at the Moana?

LF: Well, they had an orchestra there on the big lanai. That's where they danced. But in those days it was only Haoles and Hawaiians allowed, no one else.

IH: Oh yeah.

LF: Yes. It wasn't till after the war [i.e., World War II] that the Royal Hawaiian [and Moana Hotels] allowed anyone who wasn't a Hawaiian or Haole in the hotel. They didn't even allow Jewish people. Had a friend of mine who was a director from Hollywood, a French director, (Duvivier), and they wouldn't let he and his assistant in there because (the assistant was) Jewish, crazy! I suppose they drew the line between the Haoles and the Hawaiians and the others, but still there was not that racial feeling that there is now. We never had those troubles. Everybody sort of--as you might say in the old British sense--knew their place. I don't say

it was right, but it was nicer. Because I mean the ethnic groups have done a wonderful job here, the Japanese and the Chinese. They came as laborers. Now they're lawyers, doctors, and very fashionable and patrons of the arts and so forth. It's wonderful. But in those days, there was no mixing.

IH: But there were quite a few Orientals living in Waikīkī, weren't there?

LF: Very few, actually. The most were at Mō'ili'ili, up there, and the duck ponds and so forth. Some of the so-called servant class at that time. No I don't think any of them lived there. I mean the Aokis ran their store. Across the stream, that little island where the Millers were, there were a couple of Japanese families living there. But no they weren't really a part of the. . . . Same like up Pacific Heights and Nu'uanu there weren't any.

IH: Would you consider when you moved to Waikīkī, was that considered a pretty higher class of people, was it expensive to live in Waikīkī?

LF: No, I don't think so. Nothing was expensive in those days. Of course it's all comparative. We thought it was expensive then. But like when my mother bought that lot, she wanted to buy the whole block. The bank said, "Well that's ridiculous. You're just wasting your money." Because who wants to live in Waikīkī? Nobody goes there. It's full of mosquitos and the duck ponds stink and so forth. There was practically no tourist trade except the Moana Hotel. That of course, the center part, was built in about 1900. And the old Niūmalu [Hotel]. It's only when the Matson passenger liners started to come in, back in the '30s, they started to develop some of the hotels. Then they built the Royal in 1927. Then a few others came in.

IH: So why did your mother want to buy such a big property?

LF: Well, she was used to having large areas to roam around. She came from a big country, South Africa. My father was from Australia. They liked the wide open spaces. They hated little houses touching one another. But it was a very quiet area then.

Then on the beach next to the Steiners--he was the first man to bring ice cream to the islands, old man Steiner. I don't know when, back in the 1800s something. Next to them there was an old Hawaiian family had a big house. I don't remember what their name was, Emersons or something like that. A couple of big houses on the beach and then the Moana Hotel. The Cunhas (lived down near Kapahulu Avenue on the ma uka side of Kalākaua Avenue where the Holiday Inn Waikīkī stands today). And then down Kapi'olani Park where the rich Haoles lived, there was some big houses, the Castles. The old Elks Club, that was the Castle mansion there. There were some very nice houses and the Westervelts and a few other people. But that was an exclusive area by the beach on Kalākaua Avenue, or Kapi'olani Park. There used to be a racetrack



in Kapi'olani Park. In the old days of the monarchy they used to have horse racing there.

IH: Did they still have them when you were there?

LF: No, I think once in a while. I think about a couple of times I remember there were horse races. Then I used to sneak in there with the family car and see how fast I could go around the dirt track. (Laughs) When nobody knew about it.

IH: How was the water system in Waikīkī?

LF: I think it was pretty good, as good as it is now.

IH: You didn't have problems because of the flooding and swamping?

LF: Well, we didn't have a sewer system. We had cesspools. So every once in a while it had to be pumped out. But we had telephones, electric lights. But Kāhala, that's where they had some weekend cottages, and I think my mother's house she bought there, had originally been a beach house for the Punahou schoolteachers, and it was added on to. I remember some people, I knew the Wodehouses were an old family up Nu'uanu. They had a beach house, and we used to go there and I remember they had no floors in the house. It was just sand, had hammocks and things like that, a lot of kiawe trees.

And then up above Kāhala Avenue were a lot of farmers. There's still a Farmers Road there. They had pigs and horses and cows and different kinds of farms up there. The place was lousy with flies because of the cattle. Out here [i.e., Hawai'i Kai] there were no roads. It was mud flats across here, had wooden planking (for roads). We used to drive out across what is now Hawai'i Kai. And there was a little road came up near the end of Lunalilo Home Road. We'd walk from here to Makapu'u because there was no road along the coast at all. Or if we wanted to go to Makapu'u we'd go over the Pali to Waimanalo. That's where the road ended. We'd walk from there to Makapu'u.

IH: There wasn't any road around?

LF: No. That was built I think about 1927.

IH: But you folks still used to go out there?

LF: Yes, as kids you know. And down here in the mud flats (in Hawai'i Kai) we used to take the cars and see how many times we could skid around in circles.

(Laughter)

LF: Also Castle Beach, over where the Kāne'ohe marine base [i.e., Kāne'ohe Marine Corps Air Station] is, there's a beautiful beach there, Pyramid Rock at one end, the other end were caves. We'd go out there for picnics. There were mud flats



out to there. We'd have all day picnics. I used to do a lot of surfing and swimming and knew Duke and Sam and David Kahanamoku, all that bunch and the old beach boys.

IH: As a child what did you think of the beach boys?

LF: They were just friends. They all knew us, watched out so we didn't get in trouble, or drowned or. . . .

IH: Would they teach you how to surf? Or did you have to do that pretty much on your own?

LF: Oh, they used to teach the tourists, we learned it ourselves. We used to do naughty things, hide in the bushes and throw kiawe beans at the cops when they went by on their motorcycles. Run and hide, they could never catch us. But no one did any bad vandalism or anything like that, nothing vicious or nasty, that you get nowadays. Never entered our minds.

IH: Did you folks ever go to the other end of Waikīkī much, near the end of Kalākaua [Avenue]?

LF: Oh yes, we used to go there. My mother used to go and see Mrs. Castle and Mrs. Westervelt. Sometimes she'd go there and we kids would go out and play on the beach, walk around Diamond Head and so forth.

IH: What about the other end of Waikīkī, [the Kālia end]?

LF: Well it was--[where] the Ala Wai [Canal] comes out now--that was all swampy. And where Ala Moana Center is, that was all swampy and mud flats. So you never went there. There was no beach really. It was just mud. But we used to go to Pearl City a lot though. That's where they had some big old country houses there. I used to go with Kapua Wall. Her aunt was Mrs. (Carrie) Robinson. She was a Ward sister. She had a big house, Victorian style like the "Old Plantation," (the Ward home that used to be on King Street and Ward Avenue). She's a very proper Hawaiian lady, very tiny but she was a powerful politician. They were very wealthy. We used to have a lot of fun and we'd go out and she had a house (on the peninsula) at Pearl City. One time Kapua and I, we were going out there, so we took a lot of supplies. Aunt Carrie had a sixteen cylinder Cadillac. (Laughs) I said, "Kapua, let's drive around the front, be by the kitchen door instead of carrying all the stuff through the house."

She said, "Shoot." And we went. Of course the Cadillac fell in the cesspool. We got in trouble then.

(Laughter)

LF: Then we had a house on Tantalus too. In hot weather summers we used to go up there. That was very nice. We had a fireplace and everything. Hike all over Tantalus. It's still much the same as it used to be, except lower down, there are a lot of houses now in

Makiki. Those didn't used to be there. It was a gravel road. And I used to live up in the Tantalus house when I worked at the Hawaiian Pine [i.e., Hawaiian Pineapple Company]. I could make it down there in very quick time, because you didn't have to slow down for the corners, because it was gravel. So you just skidded the car around. (Laughs) And those days, of course the police knew everybody and they'd just scold us and warn us. They wouldn't do anything. Now ticket--boom, insurance rates go up.

IH: When you say the police knew everybody, was that pretty much true in all of the city?

LF: Yes.

IH: It was small enough . . .

LF: I mean, they knew the names, they knew the. . . I mean we weren't important people but my mother was well known. Anyone that was local Haole family, been here any length of time. They knew everyone. One time I gave a big party up Tantalus. I had to take all the girls home, and dump the boys in their front yards. They were all pilot. Then I got so tired, I got a flat tire on Punahou hill there. Oh I was so tired. I lay down and when I woke up the sun was shining, two police standing over me. They said, "Eh." They changed the tire for me. One of them drove me home in the car, did everything for you like that. Now boy, you'd be thrown in the slammer and that'd be it.

IH: Sounds like a nice time to have lived.

LF: Yes, to be young it was great. Was a great place to grow up in. I don't think it's quite so nice now. It's still wonderful for young people because the ocean and the beaches and the mountains. But they're not--they don't go in the mountains as much anymore. My mother was very instrumental in reviving or developing The Trail and Mountain Club and organized big hikes and expeditions. We went up Haleakalā once. It was my twelfth birthday and we had a whole bunch. There was no road up there then. We had to go on mules all up to the crater, and stay in a little stone house over night. It was really cold. And then between the islands we went by the little old boats, the Kīna'u and the Likelike. Boy it was well named. She certainly leaked. (Laughs) All these tiny boats were rough, most people got seasick between the islands. I was lucky. I never got seasick. And then in Maui you had to get into small boats to go on land because there were no docks, no harbor.

IH: Did you folks do much interisland traveling?

LF: Yes, quite a bit. I mean two or three times a year, go up and stay at the volcano. Used to be a wonderful old hotel called the Crater Hotel there, burned down later. Then of course the Volcano House was there. Sometimes we'd go over if there was a good eruption, watch it, follow it. Kaua'i, we used to go and ride bicycles all

over. Too much traffic now. Yes it was a good place to grow up in. But I think unless you were one of the big old families, you didn't have much future here. That's why I went away. Did much better in England.

IH: Okay, anything else?

LF: I don't know, except to background, my mother's background, she was from an old French family, settled in South Africa, 1656. That was before there were any Black people there. They came down later from Central Africa and that samovar, I showed you there, (LF points to a glass cabinet) was brought in 1656 to South Africa by one of my ancestors. My mother's father was Irish, from Ireland. He was born in 1820.

IH: And you have also two brothers, right?

LF: Yes, they're younger than I and they were both born here. One is Dudley and he's twenty years younger than I, and Ainsley is twenty-four years younger.

IH: Are they both still living here?

LF: Yes. They live in Kailua, Enchanted Lake. I call it Enchanted Swamp. (Chuckles) That used to be an old royal hunting lodge. Did you know that?

IH: Uh uh [No].

LF: Enchanted Lake, there has always been that pond there for centuries. The ducks fly down from Alaska in the winter. They flew down and they used that as a shooting lodge. The ducks still migrate there.

I wish they still had that railroad around (the island). That was a beautiful trip. It went around all the Wai'anae Coast, around Ka'ena Point. I don't know why they don't put a road around Ka'ena Point so people can really go around the island. Instead of going around the island, it's only half the island. Go over the Pali [Highway] and then back through Schofield [Barracks]. Miss all this end and miss all the other end.

So I don't know how much more Honolulu's going to grow. Probably like everywhere else it will grow some more. It's getting a little congested now. I can see that in the traffic. That rush hour out on Kalaniana'ole [Highway], oh boy.

IH: Okay, guess that's it then.

LF: (Thank you.)

END OF INTERVIEW

# **WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES**

## **Volume I**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i-Mānoa**

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